

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: August 08, 2025

Report Number: TH2025-0024

Report Name: Cheese Market Trends and Opportunities in Thailand 2025

Country: Thailand

Post: Bangkok

Report Category: Dairy and Products

Prepared By: Ornkamol Puranabhandu

Approved By: Mariya Rakhovskaya

Report Highlights:

Cheese consumption in Thailand is rising due to the westernization of diets, widespread use in foodservice, growing demand for convenient and diverse cheese products, and a focus on health and wellness.

Overview

Diet westernization and culinary fusion are the primary drivers of Thailand's growing cheese consumption. Cheese is a staple in many popular international dishes (e.g., pizzas and burgers) and is increasingly integrated into adapted Thai dishes. Food service plays a key role in fostering this trend by exposing consumers to diverse cheese applications, alongside the growing demand for convenience and versatility offered by processed and ready-to-eat cheese products. Furthermore, rising health and wellness consciousness, coupled with increasing disposable income and the diversification of cheese products, including artisan and specialty cheeses, are all contributing to the expanding appeal and consumption of cheese across the country.

In 2024, Thailand's total imported cheese market reached \$130 million. Australia had the largest market share (33 percent), accounting for \$42.31 million. New Zealand followed closely with \$39.90 million, representing about 31 percent. The United States ranked third with \$8.93 million or roughly 7 percent of the market. Italy accounted for \$8.18 million, representing approximately 6 percent, while France contributed \$6.12 million or about 5 percent of the market. Cheese suppliers to Thailand without a free trade agreement face a 30 percent import tariff.

Popular Cheese Variety

Mozzarella is a widely consumed and familiar cheese in Thailand, favored for its creamy and melting qualities in popular international dishes and adapted Thai dishes, due to its mild flavor. Processed and spreadable cheese varieties, such as singles and cream cheese, are also highly desired by Thais, indicating a preference for these types for bread and other uses. Cheddar, available in various forms (mild, mature, shredded, sliced), is popular for general consumption, sandwiches, and cooking, and is widely available in supermarkets. Fresh cheeses like Ricotta and Burrata are gaining traction, especially as part of the growing artisan cheese movement and in more gourmet applications. Additionally, a variety of other imported cheeses, such as Gouda, Brie, Camembert, Swiss, Feta, and Parmesan, are found in major supermarkets, catering to an increasingly diverse and sophisticated palate.

Local Dairy and Cheese Producers

Thailand's dairy sector includes both large-scale commercial producers and a burgeoning artisanal cheese industry. Thai artisanal cheesemakers are gaining recognition for producing high-quality cheeses that often incorporate local ingredients or impart a unique "Thai twist" to classic European styles. These dedicated cheese makers, exemplified by pioneers like Jartisann in Chiang Mai – celebrated for their diverse range of European-style cheese sometimes infused with a Thai rice spirit – and Dofann, specializing in goat cheeses, prioritize craftsmanship and quality. Producers such as Del Casaro in Hua Hin and Anticaluna in Bangkok are well-regarded for their authentic fresh Italian-style cheeses, while Little Goat Farm and Cheesery in Nakhon Pathom showcase innovation with their unique goat's milk creations.

Thai artisanal cheeses are increasingly accessible through various retail channels, including specialized farmer's markets and gourmet grocery establishments like VIVIN Grocery in Bangkok, Sloane's, Rimping Supermarket in Chiang Mai, and Golden Place locations nationwide. This niche sector is not only meeting the rising demand for gourmet food in Thailand's urban centers and high-end restaurants but also showcasing the rich potential and unique terroir of Thai dairy, earning increasing recognition both domestically and on the global culinary stage.

Strategically, cheese manufacturers and retailers are employing active marketing and promotional campaigns across various channels. These efforts highlight cheese's versatility, diverse taste profiles, and potential health benefits, continuously stimulating consumer interest and driving further consumption.

Diet Westernization and Culinary Fusion

The increasing presence of Western fast-food chains and international restaurants across Thailand has served as the primary gateway for cheese, naturally integrating the product as a fundamental ingredient into the Thai diet. Familiar dishes like cheesy pizzas and burgers from global brands have become commonplace, while convenience stores like 7-Eleven further normalize cheese consumption through popular items such as ham and cheese toasts. This steady exposure has laid the groundwork for broader acceptance and demand for cheese.

Beyond direct Western imports, a significant driver is the dynamic trend of fusion cuisine, where Thai chefs and home cooks ingeniously incorporate cheese into traditional local dishes. This has led to the emergence of popular and unconventional pairings, including cheese-laden instant noodles, savory cheesy roti, and innovative Pad Thai wrapped in mozzarella or grilled meats dipped in melted cheese at Mookata (Thai styled barbeque) or Shabu buffets. These innovative culinary adaptations, coupled with pervasive influence of global food trends through social media, have primed Thai consumers to explore and indulge in a diverse array of cheese-based creations.

Foodservice as a Growth Driver

Foodservice sector plays a key role in introducing and familiarizing Thai consumers with diverse cheese types and their various applications. Beyond popular items, such as pizzas, pastas, and gratins in casual dining, the growing prevalence of hotel buffets and high-end restaurants significantly contributes by offering sophisticated cheese boards with curated pairings. This elevates the perception of cheese and directly drives the demand for a wider variety of both imported and local artisanal cheeses within the Thai market. Moreover, cheese use is heavily integrated into Thailand's vibrant snacking culture. Convenient snacks and ready-to-eat meals, catering to the busy lifestyles of urban Thais, increasingly utilize cheese. Popular franchises (e.g., Potato Corner, which offers various cheese seasonings for its fries) and dessert cafés (e.g., After You Dessert Café, known for incorporating cheese into their sweet and savory toast and pastry offerings) further normalize and diversify cheese consumption.

Innovation and Product Diversification

Thai consumers are becoming more adventurous, actively seeking new flavors and textures beyond traditional dairy offerings. This demand has led to an expansion in the market, resulting in a wider variety of both imported and locally produced cheeses becoming readily available.

Health and Wellness Focus

The health benefits of cheese are increasing influencing Thai consumers, shifting their perception of cheese from a foreign delicacy to a nutritious food. This change is driven by an understanding of cheese as a nutrient-dense food, offering calcium for strong bones and high-quality protein for muscle health. For instance, Parmesan cheese is renowned for its high calcium content, making it a popular choice for consumers focused on bone density, while cottage cheese is often favored for its significant protein contribution and lower fat profile, appealing to those focused on weight management or muscle building.

Beyond these foundational benefits, many fermented cheeses, like aged cheddar or certain types of blue cheese, contribute to gut health through beneficial probiotics, aligning with growing demand for digestive wellness. For those with lactose sensitivity, the naturally low lactose content in aged cheeses (e.g., Swiss cheese or firm cheddar) makes them a suitable dairy option. There's also rising preference for "better-for-you" varieties, including lower-fat and reduced-sodium options of popular cheeses like mozzarella and feta. This evolving consumer focus on health is transforming how Thais perceive and consume cheese.

U.S. Cheese in the Thai Market

The main challenge for U.S. cheese in Thailand is centered around price competitiveness due to a 30 percent import tariff. Key competitors, such as New Zealand and Australia, benefit from Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with Thailand. Intense competition from FTA partners with more favorable pricing structures makes it challenging for U.S. cheese to capture a larger market share. Additionally, longer logistical chains and higher shipping costs from the United States compared to regional suppliers further exacerbate the price challenge. While Thai palates are evolving, there can still be a preference for milder flavors, meaning some bolder or more complex U.S. cheese varieties may not yet have universal appeal. Lastly, the public perception of some highly processed U.S. cheese varieties as less healthy due to concerns about additives and sodium can clash with the growing "better-for-you" movement among Thai consumers, who increasingly seek natural and less processed options.

U.S. cheeses benefit from their extensive variety (including uniquely American cheeses), strong reputation for quality and adherence to robust food safety standards, which resonate with health-conscious Thai consumers. Furthermore, the versatility of U.S. cheeses makes them highly suitable for both the rapidly expanding foodservice sector and the growing retail market for at-home use, leveraging the rising influence of global cuisines and the rebound in tourism.

Attachments:

No Attachments.